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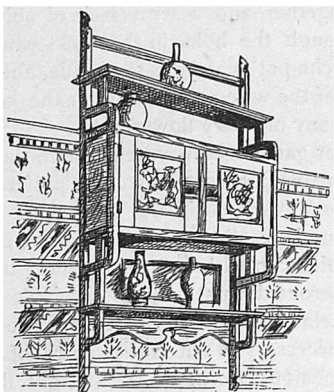
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SUGGESTIONS FOR HOME DECORATION.

If a traveler, after an absence from America of a dozen years or so, spent in some corner of the globe where no news from this country had reached him, should now return home, what a revolution he would find has been effected in what we call household art! How much more comfortable and homelike he would find our houses are than they were in former years! And they are made so, he would see, not necessarily by the outlay of large sums of money, but by means of simple attempts at decoration, which, while they improve the mind and educate the taste of the female members of the family who are most devoted to them, are a source of pleasure to every member of the household.

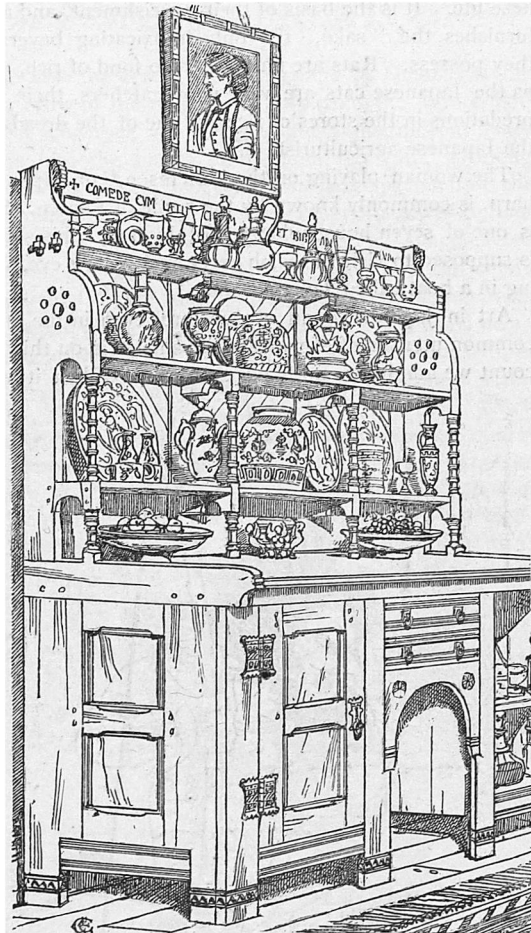
Panels and decorative plaques may be made in the most simple manner and out of very ordinary materials; even the top of a cigar-box may be ornamented with the painting of a flower or a twig of some blossoming shrub and become a work of art, which has the more value in owing its merit, not to the money expended on it, but to the artistic taste displayed in its effective decoration. Larger panels may be made in wood, the surface of which is not polished enough to hide the grain. These can be gilded and then decorated; the edges can be beveled and painted with either vermilion or black, and by using any one of a hundred devices which a little thought and ingenuity will suggest, each house may become a little sanctuary of art, showing the individuality of the occupant. In the same way hangings, lambrequins and portières can be made out of the most ordinary materials—perhaps the coarser the better—and decorated either with a few stitches of crewel work, with pieces of colored cloth or stuff applied and stitched on in bands, or even with touches of paint. Bits of inexpensive crockery distributed here and there, brightening up dark corners or relieving the monotonous tints of the walls, all help to give the home a cheerful and cosy appearance. The revival of the mediæval style of furniture, which is now so general, and which came to us from England associated with the name of Eastlake, has revolutionized the trade, and it is becoming rare to find in stores, even in remote districts, any of those old-fashioned ponderous sets of furniture which used to overwhelm our innocent taste with their awkward curves, barbarous colors, and impossible paintings of flowers and landscapes often cut out from badly-colored lithographs and varnished over after they were pasted on the panels they were supposed to decorate. One of the principal features of this innovation in furniture is the compactness of the pieces and the facility with which they can be manufactured. A person of average good taste, with the suggestion of, for instance, such drawings as we publish in the present article, can easily design an article suitable for a particular spot, and as this style does not require as much finish, but, on the contrary, looks all the better for a certain roughness, it can be constructed and put together by any intelligent carpenter. The distinguishing feature of this kind of furniture is the absence of mouldings or beading. The



HANGING SHELF.

pieces, with few exceptions, are put together at right angles; they can be sawed out of plain stuff, and when properly planed can be either rubbed with oil or lightly varnished. The ornamental lines, if any are required, can be cut into the wood, and, if light wood is used, painted in vermilion. If the wood is stained black, brass powder mixed with varnish produces an excellent substitute for gilding. Ornamental hinges, or lock plates, can be sawed out of sheet brass of sufficient thickness, and when polished, mounted on the furniture with screws. In a word, any person with a little artistic

taste can finish and decorate the piece he may have designed without much assistance. Painted tiles can also be introduced with good effect. For instance, in our first illustration, which represents a combination of a sideboard or "buffet" with a bookcase or cabinet, each one of the small square panels might contain a decorated tile. This piece of furniture is suitable either for the library or the dining-room. The upper shelves will hold books or ornaments, and the piece of drapery in the central section may, if judiciously selected in regard to color, have also a very decorative effect.



SIDEBOARD IN EASTLAKE STYLE.

Another illustration shows an arrangement of shelves which can be built over an ordinary mantelpiece. In the centre is a rectangular mirror with a beveled edge, and on each side two spaces, the backs of which can be filled according to the taste of the constructor either with mirrors, plain decorated panels, faience plaques, or simple bits of drapery. On the shelf above, running straight across, plates or little "curios" may be placed, and the central medallion can contain a concave or flat mirror or a painted plate. To complete this piece of furniture, there should be a lambrequin or drapery around the mantelshelf, coming down as far as the top of the tiles which frame the fireplace. The drapery might hang in parallel folds, not too full, in the style indicated in the upper part of the cabinet in the first illustration. A still greater improvement would be to hang under this, at each side, folds of the same material sufficiently long to hide the two ends of the structure of the mantel.

The dining-room sideboard or dresser given on this page is more distinctly Gothic in its outline. The plainness of its construction, with no attempt to conceal the pegs and keys which hold it together, seems to appeal more to the constructing genius of a carpenter than to that of a furniture builder. This piece shows us ornamental hinges and knobs, and at the top there is an inscription recommending cheerfulness while taking our meals. The letters may be cut by an inexperienced hand, for a certain amount of irregularity is quite in keeping with Gothic lettering. A very rich effect is produced by lining the back of the shelves with stamped paper made in imitation of cordova leather. Stamped velvet would be preferable, but we have only alluded to the least expensive materials in this article. The picture frame above the sideboard is not without merit. A plain mat in rough gilt card-board sets off most pictures to great advantage; the square frame is in this case ornamented with an indicated scroll. The two hanging cabinet illustrations need but little explanation; such articles are particularly useful in small rooms where but limited space can be allotted to the furniture standing on the ground. The design of the one in the next column is exceedingly simple. Our young

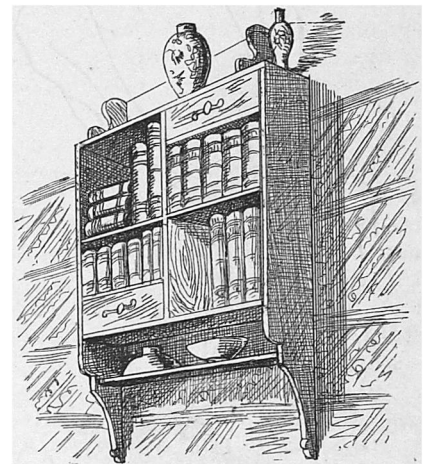
readers can find no more interesting occupation for their leisure moments than laying out and designing some simple pieces of decorative furniture, beginning with wall brackets, for instance. These they can cut out themselves—some special instruction in fret-saw work is to be given in future numbers of THE ART AMATEUR—and after a while they will be able to construct many a useful and ornamental piece of decorative furniture.

HOUSE JAPANESE DECORATION.

DURING the past few years a great change has come over what we might call our notions of the industrial, and particularly the decorative, arts, and this "Renaissance" in the nineteenth century, as it has been not inaptly called, may be traced in a great measure to the influence brought about by the opening of the Japanese ports to export trade. This has been the means of making us familiar with the manufactures of Japan, and little by little of showing us how absurd were our own systems of decoration with all their barbarous mannerisms and conventionalities, compared to the simple and natural methods employed by these men of the East whom for ages we had, in our bigoted ignorance, supposed to be little better than savages.

The art of Japan has grown out of the inherent love of its people for nature. They live in a climate where nearly all the time can be spent out of doors, and where the Creator seems to have lavished the finest treasures of scenery, foliage and other natural advantages. The most singular feature of the history of Japan is that this race of men, which originally emigrated from the Tartar tribes of Northern Asia, was entirely cut off from communication with the rest of the world, and it was long after it had dreamed out a mythology of its own and evolved out of nature, so to speak, an art peculiar to itself, that it began to feel the influence of the Chinese, its nearest neighbors. Thus it is that about all their productions there is an original basis of a special natural element, to which the intercourse with other nations has added, but which will always remain undisturbed. It is to this foundation of art that we must look in the Japanese for suggestions rather than to their more recent attempts in which they have striven to adapt themselves to what they think, or to what ignorant merchants tell them, to be the requirements of a foreign trade.

So much has been written and said about the art of Japan that it is not necessary—nor would it be within the limits of the present article—for us to go over the old ground again. Yet there are two points which cannot be too much insisted upon; these are its subtleness and its truth. For the Japanese the bare suggestion of a waterfall, the outline of a hill, a branch or a flower, is sufficient to indicate a particular spot or season, and our oriental neighbors at first had a good deal of trouble before they could be made to understand why in our pictures we went into such elaborate details and took



HANGING BOOKCASE.

so much pains with work which they considered quite unnecessary. As to truth, especially in decorative art, the Japanese have taught us many a lesson. Their decoration, though often in spots, is never patchy, and the plants and flowers seem to crowd around the vases, as nature would have them do, instead of arranging themselves more or less symmetrically round the pieces according to the taste of the artist, guided by the precise rules of so-called art. We never find large bunches of flowers or fruits stuck in the centre of regularly shaped medallions or panels and supported there by no